

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 000876

SIPDIS

CODEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IR IS](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN](#) [AFFAIRS](#) [GOI](#) [EXTERNAL](#)

SUBJECT: A/PM OLMERT AND CONGRESSMAN BERMAN DISCUSS HAMAS  
AND IRAN

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Alternate Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with Representative Howard Berman and the Ambassador on Sunday, February 26 to discuss Hamas, Iran, and the future of the Jordan Valley. Olmert stressed that Israel will not deal with a Hamas government and that only a unified, strong commitment on the part of the international community can possibly alter the Hamas stance. Israel, in the meantime, will continue to provide humanitarian assistance in any way that does not support Hamas. Regarding Iran, Olmert reiterated that Israel is the "first target," and insisted that the Iranian threat must be confronted. Olmert conveyed a sense of urgency about Iran's nuclear program, stressing the importance of a unified approach by the U.S., EU, and Russia. Olmert praised the steadfast U.S. policy against terror, and talked briefly about his government's intentions in the interim period before the election. End summary.

-----  
Hamas  
-----

2. (C) When questioned by Congressman Berman as to how Israel will deal with a Hamas government, Olmert was emphatic that unless Hamas changes, Israel will not deal with Hamas. He added that "once we compromise on this basic principle, we have lost." Israel, he said, would be willing to deal with the PA if Hamas were to accept the Quartet's conditions. Olmert said he refuses to deal with a Hamas-led government, or a government that is a "figurehead when we all know what stands behind it." He repeatedly stated that the only way to achieve a change in the Hamas position is a "unified front of the international community that will not compromise." According to Olmert, Israel believes Russia will stand by the Quartet's position, although Israel is displeased by the Russian government's willingness to meet with Hamas. Olmert stressed that Hamas must agree to Israel's right to exist and make drastic changes to its charter, which Olmert called a "most anti-Semitic, intolerant, brutal" document. Olmert pointed out that Hamas will never make peace with Israel, and is willing to negotiate only a cease-fire agreement. Olmert praised the consistency of U.S. policy against terror.

3. (C) Olmert insisted that Israel will respect the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people. The GOI cannot afford chaos in the West Bank or the collapse of the PA. Olmert reassured the Congressman that Israel will continue to provide basic needs such as water and electricity, but said Israel will not give any funding to infrastructure because money "allocated for this cannot be controlled." He urged the international community to agree on what constitutes humanitarian aid versus assistance for the PA.

-----  
Iran  
-----

4. (C) Congressman Berman asked Olmert for Israel's assessment of the timeframe in which Iran will be able to build a nuclear weapon. Olmert responded that the "real question is how long it will take them once they start an enrichment process." He claimed that Iran's nuclear facilities are already operating a number of cascades. Olmert said that "it has to be the task of the superpowers," i.e. U.S., EU, and Russia, to provide the solution to the Iranian nuclear problem. He went on to say that, while the GOI cannot tolerate an Iran with nuclear weapons, Israel does not want to endanger international efforts by open interference.

-----  
The Future of the Jordan Valley  
-----

5. (C) Congressman Berman asked Olmert about the future of the Jordan Valley. Olmert responded that the issue is how to ensure Israeli security while respecting the Jordanian perception that Israel poses a potential threat to Jordan, adding that the situation needs to be carefully monitored and analyzed. He called King Abdullah a "very strategic ally of Israel," with whom the Israeli government is in constant contact.

16. (U) MFA Deputy Director for North America Yoram Ben Ze'ev, PMO Foreign Policy Adviser Shalom Tourgeman, Military aide MG Gadi Shamni, and MFA Congressional Affairs Deputy Iris Sapir also participated in the meeting. Congressman Berman was accompanied by the Ambassador and an embassy notetaker.

17. (U) Codel Berman did not have the opportunity to clear this message prior to departing post.

\*\*\*\*\*  
Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:  
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's  
Classified SIPRNET website.  
\*\*\*\*\*  
JONES